

## WEST EUROPE

### Aide's account of Spanish dictator's conversations

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PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS - with Franco

# 'British bugged de Gaulle and kept me informed,' said Franco

From Harry Debelius  
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British Intelligence agents allegedly bugged General de Gaulle's office when he was President of France, and relayed the information to General Franco, according to a book by one of the Spanish ruler's closest aides.

General Franco is quoted as having told his military secretary at El Pardo palace in Madrid on December 6, 1938, speaking of General de Gaulle:

"The allies have put up with enough from him, and they should not be so considerate with him. England took advantage of him when he governed before, and they have had an apparatus installed in his office to record everything de Gaulle said, and afterwards this was copied down by an English Secret Service agent. London kept us informed, and that is why we are perfectly aware of the thoughts and plans of the President of the Government of our neighbour nation."

The book, entitled, *My Private Conversations with Franco*, published by Planeta in Barcelona, was written by Lieutenant-General Francisco Franco Salgado-Araujo, the late Spanish ruler's military secretary and second cousin who died three years before him.

The book also reveals that General Franco was convinced that the American Central Intelligence Agency was trying to overthrow his regime. Yet he was equally convinced that such a policy was mistaken and that his police could protect him from an assassination attempt.

The CIA's goal, in the opinion of the general was "to implant an American-style democracy the day I disappear. But they are mistaken. It will only contribute to disorder and subversion . . . and only Russia will gain from that."

As for his own safety, he felt that 90 per cent of the Spanish people supported him. The late President Kennedy's security forces "could not have been more inefficient and disastrous," in the general's opinion. Spanish police could do better: "If necessary we just bring them in from all the provinces."

The book consists of a mixture of verbatim quotes of the

General's sayings and observations by the author.

The general told his secretary that General de Gaulle "made his worst mistake by allowing political parties . . . because parties have always been the cause of agitation and infighting."

General Franco kept a photograph of Hitler in his study, and said of him: "Hitler was always quite correct with me and he never showed signs of the bad character or temperament which others attributed to him."

Mr Khrushchev, the late Soviet leader, was "sincere and peace-loving", Dr Adenauer, the late West German Chancellor, was "magnificent" and Mussolini was "a great patriot".

The new national magazine, *Opinion*, publishing serialized extracts from the book, says: "Apparently the Franco-Villaverde family was not very pleased about the publication of the book." It adds that Señor Miguel Juste, the lawyer who wrote the introduction, admits that some passages have been deleted.

The first 45,000 copies of the book sold out in the first three days.

The book was edited posthumously by the widow of the author. It includes the author's bitter remarks about how General Franco failed to appreciate all the sacrifices he had made on his behalf.

The book, consisting of a series of diary-like episodes, begins as follows: "If these impressions are published some day, neither Franco nor I will be any longer in this world. My only proposal is to let the absolute truth be known, written by one who lived close to the Caudillo for many years, who owes him a debt of gratitude like any other Spaniard but who does not forget that the fatherland and the loyalty we owe it are above Franco."

General Franco is shown to be cold and decisive and surrounded by flatterers, social climbers, power hungry people and people seeking personal gain.

His only human failing was his passion for hunting and fishing. General Franco himself when he was sent on a temporary assignment to Paris as a young officer, he had firmly

refused all invitations to explore that city's night life.

The secretary complains more than once about the time and public money spent by General Franco on hunting and fishing trips rather than on affairs of state. Shooting expeditions frequently turned into audiences for people seeking favours and business advantages. After returning from a hunting or fishing trip, the general would often spend up to an hour standing and chatting with his ministers about the catch.

This obviously bored his secretary, who quotes a remark from General Agustin Muñoz Grandes: "If we do not talk with him about his catch, he will put us all on the retired list."

More than General Franco himself, the people who surrounded him come in for criticism. The general's wife, Señora Carmen Polo de Franco, was "absurdly haughty". The first Vice-President, General Muñoz Grandes, is said to have had his eye on General Franco's job.

Receptions at El Pardo palace were full of people who were playacting, and General Franco's personality was too chilly to break down the barrier of sham and adulation. "The Caudillo is a very kind man but cold, very cold. Many times he has left his friends frozen. . . . This attitude is more pronounced when his wife is present."

He was playing off one faction against another and one personality against another, listening to each.

"The Caudillo never asks anything. He lives contented and seems to ignore mood, public opinion and many other things, preferring to believe only what his ministers tell him."

In 1955 the general told his secretary: "At the end of the war the victors wanted to make sure that the nations they defeated would not rise again soon. So they forced them to adopt the democratic system, knowing full well that this would never bring them prosperity."

General Franco is quoted as saying: "As you well know, I have never been a Fascist." It is only one thing, a Francoite, and he will be chief of state until he dies."